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SUBJECT: EAST JAVA: VOTERS IGNORE ENDORSEMENTS; POLITICIANS IGNORE
PERFORMANCE RATINGS

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11. (SBU) Summary: Media giant Jawa Pos Group's Pro Otonomi Institute (JPIP) was established in 2002 to evaluate and rank the performance of individual regencies in East Java. While JPIP has successfully focused the attention of some elected officials on the relationship between job performance and public satisfaction, thus far, the rankings have not been used by incumbents or their challengers as campaign tools. After the recent upset of the incumbent in Bojonegoro Regency, that might be changing. The Regency's plummeting JPIP rankings should have been indicative of voter discontent, but neither the incumbent nor the local religious leaders who endorsed him got the message. The Bojonegoro voters' decision to ignore the advice of their community leaders may offer a warning to other politicians that voter discontent, as reflected in JPIP rankings, will increasingly influence East Java's election results. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On December 11, Pol/Econ Officer and Pol/Econ Assistant met with Maksum (one name only), Managing Editor of Jawa Pos and Director of Jawa Pos Group's Pro Otonomi Institute (JPIP). The ratings compiled by JPIP cover three key areas with three related sub-areas: Public Services, Economic Development and Local Political Performance. Innovation, going beyond simply providing a service and radically altering the way services are provided, is given special attention by JPIP. The rankings can highlight some interesting trends, if politicians are paying attention. Out of a total of 38 regencies in East Java, Lamongan Regency, which has a reputation for strong management, rocketed from number 35 in 2005, to number 10 in 2006 in the category of Public Services/Education. By contrast Banyuwangi, Jember, Tuban and Sampang regencies scored consistently in the bottom third of each category between 2005 and 2006. Local elections in these regencies in 2008 will test the predictive ability of JPIP's survey data on the incumbent's re-election hopes.

13. (SBU) The Regents themselves are not quite ready to accept JPIP's results. One Regent contacted the JPIP office to ask that his Regency be excused from the competition because they were "not ready to compete this year." When Maksum explained that exposing this lack of preparedness was precisely the point of the survey, the Regent was incensed. Concerned about a loss of face and bad publicity, more than one Regent has offered JPIP

bribes to gain a higher ranking, or even an award. Maksum tells these Regents that only improved public services as reflected in surveys will affect their rankings, "JPIP doesn't decide who gets the award, their constituents do." Regents have a hard time understanding this, Maksum said.

¶4. (SBU) Results of a recent Regency election in Bojonegoro, located almost 100 km west of Surabaya and home to Exxon-Mobil's Cepu oilfields, suggest that the incumbents and the parties that supported them should have paid more attention to their dismal JPIP ranking -- near the bottom of the list in providing public services. Bojonegoro dropped from 20 to 30 between 2005 and 2006 in the category of public services. Reaping the rewards of voter dissatisfaction were challengers Suyoto and Setyo Hartono, who won with 32.5% of the vote and support from the National Mandate Party (PAN), the United Development Party (PPP) and the National Bull Freedom Party (PNBK). The incumbents, Retired Army Col. Santosa and Budi Irawanto, who were supported by the Democratic Party (PD), the Indonesia Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), garnered just 26%. The third place finishers Thalbah and Taman Syaifudin, who were supported by the National Awakening Party (PKB) and Golkar, received nearly 25%. None of the losing candidates appeared interested in campaigning on the issues, according to Maksum, preferring to depend on religious leaders (Kiai) to get out their vote.

The Kiai are Kingmakers no More

¶5. (SBU) A December 13 Jawa Pos opinion piece by Zainuddin Maliki, Rector of Muhammadiyah University in Surabaya, points to the Bojonegoro race as a watershed for political endorsements. Traditionally, powerful Kiai have had the ability to make or break candidates. The Kiai's storied ability to deliver votes to endorsed candidates has been iron clad, particularly in rural East Java. As a result, nobody correctly predicted the outcome in Bojonegoro because powerful Kiai had endorsed the incumbent. Two nationally prominent Kiai were caught wrong-footed on

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Election Day. The candidates who placed last were endorsed by Hasyim Muzadi, the head of Nadhlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia. Another influential Kiai, Abdullah Faqih, head of Langitan Islamic boarding school (pesantren) in Tuban, East Java, endorsed the incumbent. Maliki pointed to the over-reliance on these endorsements by the losing candidates and their Parties for the upset.

¶6. (SBU) In a 13 December meeting, Kacung Marijan, Professor of Political Science at Airlangga University, concurred with Maliki's conclusions. Kacung stressed to us the emblematic nature of Bojonegoro's recent election, noting that Kiai now lack the authority to tell people who to vote for. He observed that while the more devout "East Java horseshoe" (tapal kuda) region stretching from Madura to Pasuruan might still be strongly influenced by Kiai in the voting booth, Kiai influence has been blunted in East Java as a whole. Marijan said that a true appeal to the "common man" (wong cilik) would characterize future campaigns.

Can the Pocketbook Beat the Holy Book?

¶7. (SBU) If Bojonegoro's experience is any guide, religious endorsements are no longer a substitute for a solid appeal to the broadest possible spectrum of voters. The winning campaign mounted by Suyoto and Setyo Hartono focused on improving the lives of the "wong cilik" in a rural regency where 80% make their living as farmers. The Suyoto-Hartono team campaigned actively among bicycle-rickshaw drivers, small traders and farmers. Kiai endorsements were displayed prominently on posters, banners and in speeches, but they failed to motivate voters. According to Maliki, other candidates were counting on endorsements from religious leaders to secure these votes and ignored this key constituent.

18. (SBU) JPIP's rankings would appear to provide a handy list of poorly run Regencies and, by association, vulnerable incumbents. Despite obvious usefulness to incumbent and challengers alike, Maksum told us that neither elected officials nor political parties seem to have drawn the connection between the JPIP rankings and future political strategy. Nor have the rankings found their way into campaign rhetoric itself. Bojonegoro's election has shown the limits of a candidate's or a party's ability to assess their support and strategize. The declining ability of local elites to influence election outcomes is equally significant. It remains to be seen whether the lesson of Bojonegoro will be learned by incumbents in regencies like Jember, Tuban and Sampang -- all rock-bottom scorers on the JPIP list.

MCCLELLAND